

Bay Path

TRAILS

(The following article by Henry W. Litchfield is reprinted from The Silver Lake News. -- Ed.)

When in Plymouth County talk of Indian trails starts up, it is to the "old Bay Path"--Plymouth to Boston--that everyone's mind turns. But its first place is due to use made by early white settlers, not because it held any leading position in the Indian time.

The first Plymouth colonists in 1621 found a broad wellworn track trending northwest across Jones River in Kingston by the "old wading place" and through Pembroke round North River headwaters to South Hingham. Trail's end was Neponset, village of Chickataubut, sachem of the Massachusetts tribe.

Seemingly these colonists--traveling mainly by boat--paid scant heed to the Path until Boston's founding in 1630. Then it became their land road to the Massachusetts Bay Colony or to "the Bay" for short. Governor Winthrop visiting in 1632 assumed a godfatherly office of changing place names inside Plymouth territory. Not until a bridging of North River about 1650 was the highway of intercolony travel materially altered.

By court order Duxbury's west bound was in 1641 fixed at the Path but for our day its location remained a mystery until the late Mercer Vernon Tillson of South

Hanson, a retired ironworker, explored at cost of much physical fatigue and round 1905 pinpointed it at Barker Garrison house and at Ludden's Ford or Clapp rubber factory on Indian Headriver. Wil-

liam Wendell Bryant's excellent map of Pembroke-Hanson in a Bryantville News bicentennial issue of 1912 traces it from present Duxbury as following High, Center, Oldham and West Elm streets into Hanover.

Later research shows some variations. For the redskins' habit of matching road with season of year holds here also. Traveling northwest in summer they left High just beyond the William Key house, crossed Brook and wide meadow, and climbed Library Lane so called to join the winter Path at the common.

Why, we may ask, winter upland trail and meadow summer trail? Wherever possible, the canny winter-tramping red dodged a health peril of wet leggings. Wading in Provincetown surf the Pilgrims of 1620 got the wet feet and chest colds which in too many cases proved fatal. Small boys today take notice.

BAY PATH

(Continued from Page Eleven)

It is known that the winter Bay Path crossed Indian Head River over a log at the foot of Hanover's Mill Lane which is Spring street continued. Probably in Pembroke, by taking still traceable upland footways to the John Bonney homestead by George Foster recently occupied, it sidestepped West Elm street's lower part. This was then unprotected by culverts and melting snow from the highland could form a kind of fast-moving glacier.

With the Bonney area a trail--Wampatuck street now--direct from Furnace Pond's village made connection. It reminds us that Furnace to Neponset traffic inside the Massachusetts tribe was for Indian centuries the Path's main service, not the rare tourism from Wampanoag Patuxet (Plymouth) across a tribal line. Only growing Boston's relation with Plymouth made of the Path an active whole.

On its Massachusetts section appears the touch of nature that makes redman and paleface kin. For farm villages in New England the general store's cider barrel was long an institution. It gave place to corner soda fountain or Coke machine. But before all this, for Indian travelers in July heat a bubbling trailside spring of clear water offered a prized treat. To-day at the crossing of Silver Brook and Route 3 in Hanover a natural spring, on the Path's summer course, still flows. Farther northwest, also on the summer course, Assinippi--rock water--gave name to a modern neighborhood. And if we return to Duxbury and follow the Franklin street summer course of King Philip's Path, there Philip's Spring by its traditional name spotlights a chief's thirst.

In his Bay Path the subtle savage invented a way to beat the roadblocks of underbrush or creek. How much the whites profited by its convenience was seen in Phineas Pratt's terrible cross-country tramp, March of 1622, Weymouth to Plymouth, without benefit of it. But bridging of North River round 1650 worked a change and, except in emergency, the Path-

to-the-Bay as such ceased to exist. A more express expressway had been found.

Harry W. Litchfield